

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EMANUEL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. EMANUEL addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

SPLIT PERSONALITY

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to speak out of order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. McDERMOTT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Ohio has shown one of the hallmarks of this administration, its ability to spin a tale. Say it often enough and the American people may actually begin to believe it. In fact, they are so good at it they may have begun to believe their own press releases.

The other day, Secretary of War Rumsfeld delivered a major speech at the National Press Club. Along the way, terror got a new name, Osama Hussein. Or was it Saddam bin Laden? In English, the rule is I before E except after C but in this administration I equals A. Iraq equals al Qaeda because they say so, not because there is a shred of evidence. There is not.

Mr. Rumsfeld appeared to link Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein in the same breath. He has got them all confused in his head now. He has said the story so many different times and they still are trying to connect the al Qaeda with what happened on 9/11. Or maybe it was just a stumble compounded later in his appearance by another gaffe. Or was it reading too many spin memos that your head begins to turn and spin and spin and you do not know where you are. At the very least, this shows the effect of a PR campaign that began well before the invasion of Iraq. The separation between the rhetoric and the reality has blurred into one and the same. Over and over again, the administration has exaggerated the tie between Iraq and al Qaeda. When questions from the Congress and the American people outstripped the rhetoric, the administration's rhetoric got louder, a lot louder. Today it is so loud that it is hard to hear the quiet truth. But it is there.

It has been over a year and a half since the President ordered the beginning of hostile action against Iraq. It has been over a year since the President declared "mission accomplished." Absolutely no one on the planet believes that the mission has either been accomplished or will be anytime soon. Even some Republicans are now talking about a presence in Iraq over the next two decades. Is that the plan for winning the peace? Is that the plan for the consequence of going to war in Iraq?

Today, U.S. military commanders are using more air strikes in Iraq. If that

helps save American lives or keep soldiers safe, out of harm's way, I am all for it. If this is a new military strategy, then it raises the question, why can we not get a lot of American soldiers out of Iraq and get them out of harm's way? It has been almost 3 months since the so-called handover. In those 90 days, 150 soldiers have died and 900 have been wounded. We cannot ask what we are going to do to win the peace because U.S. soldiers are still fighting and dying in a war. This is not the time to ask how the administration plans to win the peace, because there is no peace in Iraq today.

Colin Powell came out yesterday and said we have a secret plan that sometime soon we will roll out so we can get stability at the time of the election. What is he waiting for? The election? Or the fact that he does not know what he is doing? U.S. forces managed a weekend without a military death but the death count of innocent Iraqi citizens is up dramatically over the last 48 hours. In another day of war, there can be no peace.

Today, the American people have a fog of war, reality obscured by an administration which would prefer that we merely accept their version of reality or versions when the story needs to change. While it may have been a slip of the tongue the other day at the National Press Club, one wonders whether Secretary Rumsfeld inadvertently expressed publicly what he thinks privately. Are bin Laden and Hussein two different faces of evil, or are they some kind of split personality? Spin the rhetoric around enough and it gets hard to separate it from the reality on the ground, here or there.

The administration has wrapped itself in the mantle of fighting the war on terror. Just today this administration could have struck a major blow against terrorism simply by extending the ban on assault weapons. These are bona fide weapons of mass destruction. We know where they are and we know how to keep them out of the hands of the bad guys. The President said he favored the ban, but then he did absolutely nothing to make it happen. You think he could not get the leadership in the House of Representatives to act on this if he meant business? He never meant anything close to that.

The administration did not need weapons inspectors from the U.N. or air strikes from the military to find and isolate weapons of mass destruction that will threaten police officers and our security officers and our homeland security. All the President needed to do was tell his surrogates in this body and the other body to extend the ban. That did not happen, despite overwhelming support from the American people, despite overwhelming support from law enforcement officers. Instead, the administration used empty rhetoric to disarm a true weapon in the war on terror.

The regime is coming to an end, Mr. Speaker, in 49 days.

FLORIDA WEATHERS THE STORMS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, in a few minutes, my other colleagues from Florida will be speaking on the horrible disasters that have befallen our State. I am proud to stand with my Florida colleagues in a bipartisan manner to congratulate and thank all of the men and women who have helped to make our fellow citizens be better able to cope with this crisis.

I want to express my condolences for the victims of Hurricanes Frances and Charley and the victims of Hurricane Ivan in the Caribbean. These storms have caused a great loss of life and property, but it would have been far worse had it not been for the sound planning and the quick response from Governor Jeb Bush and President George W. Bush. Governor Bush organized an effective plan and ensured that the National Guard would mobilize in the areas that were hardest hit.

I also would like to commend President Bush for his quick declaration of an emergency and his handling of the disasters. Thanks to President Bush, Floridians were able to quickly receive the essentials that they needed. President Bush traveled to Florida to inspect the disaster and was handing out water and ice to those affected and he spoke to Floridians who had lost everything in this disaster.

Here in Congress, we acted last week to pass an emergency supplemental appropriations bill to help FEMA pay for the disaster relief of Hurricane Charley. Soon our colleagues in Congress are once again rising to the same challenges as we prepare to pass another supplemental appropriations bill for Hurricane Frances.

□ 2000

I am proud to represent both Miami-Dade County and Monroe County. Miami-Dade experienced the loss of electricity in many areas as well as a shortage of fuel, and the Florida Keys have been evacuated twice, leading to a huge economic loss to that area. Today for the third time in a month, another part of Florida braces for a disastrous storm. All of south Florida prays for the safety of those in the path of Hurricane Ivan, and I am confident that if it were to strike our State, Governor Bush and President Bush and all of the emergency workers will once again be ready to quickly respond.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to bring to the attention of this Chamber the economic losses which the Florida Keys have suffered as a result of the two mandatory evacuations imposed in less than a month. Tourists had to leave, which meant a huge economic loss for the area. The Florida Keys badly depends on the thousands and thousands of tourists who come to enjoy south Florida. My good friend, the colorful commissioner of Key West,